CHAP. X.

The precise number of Mands occupied at any one time, has not been ascertained, but the best authorities consider them to be not less than 40. Hence, by a short calculation, we find that the tribe consisted, in 1870, of not less than 407 males + 306 females, or 713 souls; of whom 258 were men in the prime of life.

Now, if the Report from which I have just quoted,[1] should be correct, it would appear that the tribe has more than doubled in about 23 years; and the opportunity, has been lost to me; of witnessing the process, and of ascertaining the causes, by means of which a race may die out. With every desire for the happiness of existing Todas, I still grieve to have been deprived of the interesting study.

It is very much to be lamented that no vital statistics exist of the people: and that such as I have been able to collect, cannot be depended upon, absolutely; being merely approximate.

1. Of the 196 people found noted in the Census Table,[2] I ascertained by personal inspection that there were only 2 cases of natural malformation; viz., in the village of Koanakoar, a young woman who was a cripple from birth: in Keshkir, a girl squinting with one eye.

2. Only 3 people possessed defects that would either tend to shorten life or to evidence the probability of its soon drawing to a close; viz., in Ebgodu, a man nearly deaf and blind from old age: in the same village an infant with a skin disease: and in Kirzho, a middle-aged man in bad general health.

Many were scored on the shoulder as a remedy for rheumatism. One woman was in quarantine after child-birth. And one woman was blind of an eye from a spark of fire having flown into it. It is said that contagious disease is not uncommon, but I am greatly disposed to doubt the statement, as applied to the present day. None came before me marked by smallpox. A case of leprosy was met with; but as the

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[1] [See p. 102, category 116 -- Analyst]
[2] [See pp. 98 and 99, category 116 -- Analyst]

7:Thurston E-5 (no date)1909
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not kill it. Do you think we could kill it ourselves? Those tell lies who say we laid it down before the opening of the buffalo-pen, so that it might be run over and killed by the animals. We never did such things, and it is all nonsense that we drowned it in buffalo's milk. Boys were never killed—only girls; not those who were sickly and deformed—that would be a sin; but, when we had one girl, or in some families two girls, those that followed were killed. An old woman (kelachi) used to take the child immediately it was born, and close its nostrils, ears, and mouth with a cloth thus—here pantomimic action. It would shortly droop its head, and go to sleep. We then buried it in the ground. The kelachi got a present of four annas for the deed." The old man's remark about the cattle-pen refers to the Malagasy custom of placing a new-born child at the entrance to a cattle-pen, and then driving the cattle over it, to see whether they would trample on it or not.* The Missionary Metz† bears out the statement that the Toda babies were killed by suffocation.

847 178 [732] [465]

At the census, 1901, 453 male and 354 female Todas were returned. In a note on the proportion of the sexes among the Todas, Mr. R. C. Punnett states‡ that "all who have studied the Todas are agreed upon the frequency of the practice (of infanticide) in earlier times. Marshall, writing in 1872, refers to the large amount of female infanticide in former years, but expresses his conviction that the practice had by that time died out. Marshall's evidence is that of native assurance only. Dr. Rivers, who received the same assurance, is disinclined to place much confidence in

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* Ellis. History of Madagascar.

† Tribes inhabiting the Neilgherry Hills. By a German missionary, 1856. [113]

‡ Proc. Cambridge Philosoph. Soc., XII, 1904.

13: Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW60 Toda AW60

595 833 little say in the matter. Whether this is generally true of other Toda households, I cannot say, not having studied them in such intimate detail as the Melgarol (people from Melgarsh). It was Erzigwuf who would decide which of the three brothers, Mutnarsh, Kuddhue, or Munbokwutn, she would have with her for the night. She usually slept with [732] [845] [787] the eldest, Mutnarsh, and while I was in the Nilgiris would have nothing to do with Kuddhue because he being a cripple, she feared that he was the cause of her having twice given birth to twins (an evil omen with the Todas). I rarely saw the youngest, Munbokwutn, join her; so much even, that I enquired once if he ever slept with her. To which I got the reply that if he did not, he would not stay. Erzigwuf's predilection for Mutnarsh was due to her preferring him, I felt, because he had the strongest personality. He was also the eldest which, even if it did not prejudice the common wife in his favour, did undoubtedly contribute to give him the assurance and poise which attracted her.

833 I enquired which was the usual position in which these people had coitus, and heard that it was that in which the woman lies on her back with the man on top of her, between her open legs. Only the inhabitants [186] of Malabar "do it the other way round", I was told, not without a certain amount of amused sarcasm. I also heard that copulation never [352] [515] took place, and should never do so, on the *ertülkh*, the raised earthen platform which serves as a bed and seat inside a Toda *arsh*. But as I received contradictory information on this point (others assuring me that it was, on the contrary, just there that couples made love), the latter should be accepted with reservation.

842 [171] No kind of birth control is practised at all, as is generally the case all over India. This is, to a large extent, due to ignorance, and where this is not so, to religious convictions, the former of these two reasons being probably dominant with the Todas. It is so in spite of a very 831 active and varied sexual life of both sexes within the tribe, something which strikes even an untrained observer at once. Toda women, I was told by Kanvarsathi, "think of nothing else (than sexual intercourse), escaping whenever they can into the *sholas* to copulate with men of their choice". Emeneau has recorded in *Language and Social Forms: A Study of Toda Kinship Terms and Dual Descent*, p. 173 (see Bibliography), that the Todas are "vigorously and adventurously sexual". He also says, further on: "Ordinary marriages within the moiety and the freedom allowed in changing mates, and the *to:tjoff* (*terershtl*) institution providing for sexual unions overstepping the boundary between the moieties give evidence of a high degree of sexual activity." He goes on

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[Melgarsh Village]

(6) Nalsirwurf: The young wife of Karnoz, whom he took in 1945, thus putting an end to the polyandrous arrangement with Pads. She is twenty-five years old – thirty-five years younger than her husband. She is a beautiful woman, probably the handsomest of the whole tribe, and knowns it. She assumes languorous, indolent airs, which give her a certain amount of added attraction, as it suits her dusky, classical features, and figure, but I was unable to make out if this behaviour was due to a deliberately studied poise or if it was the result of her life with Karnoz which, as was to be expected, is not a happy one; the old man is far too domineering and matter of fact with her, while obviously very proud that he has taken her to wife. 159 621

(7) MUTNARSH: An ugly, hard-working, intelligent and willful man, the real head of the whole family for which he selflessly works very hard. He is devoted to his wife and children and would do anything to assist them. When I first met Mutnarsh (after the birth of the two last twins) he struck me as being unreliable and unpleasant; but after I had got used to him, I came to appreciate his outstanding qualities as a husband and father, and developed considerable respect for him. He too is a gardener in the Botanical Gardens. [464]

(8) KUDDHUE: A cripple, aged twenty-five, ten years younger than Mutnarsh. He cannot walk upright, the broken joints of his knees keeping him from extending these, and obliging him to walk with them constantly bent. The story which his family tells is that, as a child, he was sitting on the wall of the buffalo pen, when Kali (the Indian goddess of destruction) in the form of wind threw him down and broke both his legs. He is extremely ugly, with a wild look in his eyes, but on the other hand, he is exceptionally good-natured and happy, and is very attached to the children who do not, however, return his affection. He is nearly always employed as a priest, if not in the *tarvali* of the Melgarsh *mad*, in the tribe's *wursulis* for which he is very much sought after. [732] [793]

(9) MUNBOKWUTN: The youngest brother of the trio, aged nineteen. When I was in the Nilgiris ten years earlier, he was only nine, but already a polyandrous husband of the brothers' common wife, Erzigwuf. He is still only an overgrown boy, very athletic and strong, a great favourite of the children with whom he behaves more as a big brother than as a father. He takes an active part in the tending of the buffaloes, and is never far from the *mad* where he apparently likes to stay. [595]

(10) Erzigwuf: The embodiment of motherhood, aged thirty, she is one of the few fertile women of the tribe (there were one hundred Toda women who were sterile at the time of my stay in 1949). As she is so [842]